

MOTHUSI DID NOT GIVE US A FISH; HE TAUGHT US HOW TO FISH

"Bear ye one another's burdens... For every man shall bear his own burden." Galatians 6:2, 5

These two verses seem to contradict each other. In the Scriptures a single word can have several meanings. The meaning of "burden" in verse five means that you must carry your own backpack (burdens that only you can bear; such as a sickness or death), but the "burdens" of verse two means that if you are sick or wounded the Marines will carry your pack for you (overburdens that others may help to bear). **My definition of 'indigenous principles' is to allow others to carry their own gear when it is possible for them to do so but render a helping hand when it is needed.**

The title of this article was spoken by Teko Melamu, of the Tswana tribe, to describe the 'indigenous principles' implemented by Mothusi (Moe-to-see), yours truly, to establish several churches and a Bible school in Southern Africa. Perhaps 'indigenous principles' were instilled in me by the Marine Corps, long before beginning missionary service more than forty years ago, in 1980. Following a tour of duty with the 26th Marines, I began to contemplate rejoining the fight with Combined Action Platoons. The motto of the officers and men of the Combined Action Units in I Corps was to "work yourself out of a job!" The methodology of training 'indigenous' people to bear the responsibility for themselves was used by CAP Marines in 'Nam" and has been around for a considerable time.

"...Princeton-educated General David Petraeus preached and was credited with this same gospel of counterinsurgency. Defeating an 'indigenous' resistance, the thinking went, required a unique approach to warfare. To oversimplify, it was less about killing the enemy than winning over and protecting the local population; less about guns and bombs than about hearts and minds. That meant forging personal relationships, training local security forces, and investing in expensive development projects. In short, it meant nation building. It was often described as the Petraeus Doctrine." Quotation by Michael Crowley. Again, nothing new here! The Marines developed and practiced this same approach years before General Petraeus came upon the scene. General Westmoreland criticized the Marines for using these same tactics in jungle warfare during the Vietnam War. He thought it was a waste of highly trained Marine Corps personnel.

We were sometimes called 'Peace Corps Volunteers' with guns, assigned to train a barefoot militia; the 'Minuteman' of Vietnam; to fight for HIS family, HIS home, HIS plot of ground, HIS neighbors, and HIS village. Abraham Lincoln said, "You cannot help man permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves." We soon found that if we did everything for the Nghia Quan, he would gladly sit back and let you. Instead, we were to equip and train the local rice farmers, while working ourselves out of a job, by helping the villagers to establish schools, clinics, and stability before moving on to another village. When you teach them to bait their own hooks, the villagers soon realized that a welfare state (socialism) **doesn't work long-term** and it is better to learn the art of fishing than it is to receive a fish. They grabbed their poles and gear (carbines and grenades) and went fishing; because he began to realize that the village was HIS responsibility, sink or swim. He became acutely aware that success would come with HIS sacrifices, HIS gifts, HIS labor, HIS sweat, HIS blood, using HIS knowledge, according to HIS culture. Leadership is training and delegating responsibility to others to get the job done. We didn't strive to make a little America overseas or clone little Americans to run around in the village wearing Ray Bans and Levi Jeans, but rather taught them that natural 'indigenous' growth can occur in any soil (Vietnam), amid any conditions (wartime).

The Lord once fed 5,000 men with two small fishes. **One of the things that I remember best about the 'Nam' is teaching the Vietnamese people how to fish. Worms are good, but not to be compared with grenades! After throwing a few 'frags' over the side of the boat; two small men had 5,000 fishes!** Miraculously good fishing! 'Indigenous principles' teach men to fish for themselves and the Lord will honor these principles as we trust Him and exercise faith in His ability to provide. The Marine Corps League is always ready to help others, but there are times when we have to step back and let people figure things out for themselves. If we are told that someone needs our help, but that someone responds to a query by saying that they are doing fine, then back off and give them the benefit of doubt, rather than invade their fishing spot during a personal trial. **I'm like an ole' hound dog when I'm sick or injured, I just want to curl up in a corner and be left alone. There are others who feel the same way. It's like fishing in the solitude of your own private pond that is posted, no trespassing! We don't want to pull the cane pole out of someone's hands when the float starts to bobble.** Dignity and pride allows a Marine to bait his own hook, drag in his own fish, and carry his own kit for as long as possible, "For every man shall bear his own burden." The flip side of the coin is that we leave no man behind at the fishing hole and should always be ready to render a helping hand when it is needed. Especially if they hook a big one! **"Bear ye one another's burdens..."** Semper Fi

Chaplain Ron